

HOMILY – MERCY AND CREATION - 28 FEBRUARY 2016 - LENT 3rd SUNDAY

During this Lent, we bring two themes together “MERCY” and CREATION”

The Gospel of Luke today tells us of the Galileans killed by Pilate, and the 18 people killed when the tower of Siloam collapsed upon them.

The first example is of REPRESSION, MURDER and DISRESPECT for RELIGIOUS BELIEF. We think of Syria, Iraq, Yemen, northern Nigeria and other parts of the world.

The second example – what was the cause of the tower’s COLLAPSE?

Was it poor building design, poor building construction, lack of maintenance – we are not told, but innocent people died?

Luke shows that these events affect us. Jesus is a Galilean.

The tower of Siloam was in the city of Jerusalem, the centre of their faith.

Galilee and Jerusalem.

What tragedies happen to some, they happen to all of us.

In both cases, all are called to repent, to reform.

The scripture scholar Joseph Fitzmyer tells us:

The words *‘more guilty’* concerning the deaths, literally translates as *‘were debtors beyond all who’*, reflective of the Aramaic sense of debtor.

The question in the parable,

‘Why should it even use up the soil?’ is literally translated as

‘Why should it waste even the earth?’

Whether the terror of war, or being in debt to wastage, or people who might be unjust in business transactions and work, it affects us.

The parable of the fig-tree is a parable of MERCY, giving one more year, one more OPPORTUNITY to turn around this WASTAGE of the soil.

The parable comes after the wastage of people’s lives in conflict and everyday life.

Our Catholic teaching on the 'corporal works of mercy' and the 'spiritual works of mercy' is part of this Year of Jubilee.

We could point to peace or dignity or creation or justice or love or other moral themes.

Given the references to wastage of human life and the soil, let us reflect on CREATION as a WORK of MERCY.

Recently Cardinal Peter Turkson was at Villanova University in Philadelphia to present a Lenten address titled [“Care of Creation as a Work of Mercy”](#).

He reflects on a more appropriate translation, in light of the teaching of Pope Francis on creation.

Cardinal Turkson speaks on the corporal works of mercy and the spiritual works of mercy.

“First, here are the seven corporal ones:

1. to feed the hungry; especially those who suffer from poverty and drought.
2. to give drink to the thirsty; especially those who lack clean, abundant water.
3. to clothe the naked; especially those exposed to the cold of winter and the sting of indifference.

4. to give shelter to the homeless; especially victims of war, storms, and rising seas.
 5. to care for the sick; especially those who have been poisoned by the wastes of our industries.
 6. to ransom the captive; especially those oppressed by cruel economic and political systems, or from addictions to the pleasures of the world.
 7. to protect the dignity of the human person, especially in reverently burying the dead.
- And here is an additional 8th:
8. to care for our common home.”

- “Now, here are the seven spiritual ones, again with the same additional eighth:
1. to teach those who do not see how their lifestyles harm others.
 2. to offer hope to those who despair for the future of loved ones or the future of the world.
 3. to admonish those who sin against neighbour, the natural order, or the laws of nature.
 4. to patiently bear the sufferings inflicted by gluttony and greed.
 5. to willingly forgive offences committed against humanity and the goodness of creation.
 6. to comfort those afflicted by corruption, by changes to our climate, and by unwholesome desires.
 7. to desire always to pray for the living and the dead and future generations.
- And again here is the additional 8th:
8. to care for our common home.”

The Cardinal says of care of creation:

“...To appreciate care of creation as an eighth spiritual work of mercy, consider the Holy Father’s central question in *Laudato si’*: “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?”

“...Care of creation could also be our eighth corporal work of mercy, through concrete actions large and small – from the everyday actions of good ecological citizens to pressuring national governments to implement what they have promised. We must keep alert about what is happening to our common home, “not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it”

During this LENT, we ponder the works of mercy, we DARE TO ACT on them.

May we grow in our respect of, and action for, the dignity of human life and the care of creation.

Let us resolve never to waste the opportunities and gifts God has given us, living and caring for our COMMON HOME.

Our gifts of bread and wine come from creation and human work, from our common home and from God’s mercy to us.

Let us now pray.

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Homily – Mercy and Creation – 28 February 2016]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/022816-third-sunday-lent.cfm>]